

THE GEHRING GROUP

FILE AREA NETWORK

Building a Tiered File Storage Environment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Technology Challenge

More cost-effectively manage a growing file data environment by implementing a tiered storage architecture, without disrupting users' access to their data

Solution

- Brocade® File Lifecycle Manager® (FLM)

Benefits

- Policy-based, automated archival migration that tiers file data according to business priorities
- Six-month return on investment
- Increased administrator and user productivity

The Gehring Group is a leading company for the planning and construction of precision honing machines. Just as it does with its own products, Gehring also places a high priority on superlative quality in the IT solutions it uses. With an eye to preserving and expanding the company's competitive lead in the global market, Gehring is constantly innovating, optimizing, and adapting its business processes and IT infrastructure.

From the start of its project to restructure the company's backup and disaster recovery strategy, Gehring pursued a way to distribute file data across various different storage systems. At this early juncture, it was clear that a large number of unused and rarely used files were stored on the company's NetApp NAS appliances. Like many other companies, Gehring had encountered one of the most common problems in IT: its storage capacity was nearly exhausted and could not be further expanded without considerable expense. To address this challenge, Gehring worked with Brocade

Partner Stemmer GmbH to implement a tiered storage architecture utilizing Brocade File Lifecycle Manager (FLM) software.

AN INNOVATIVE FILE MANAGEMENT SOLUTION

Storing Gehring's infrequently used data sensibly and cost-effectively required classifying and then migrating files from high-end NetApp primary storage systems to more cost-effective NetApp secondary storage. To accomplish this, Gehring deployed Brocade FLM. The Brocade application is a policy-based data management solution that automates the distribution of files between primary and secondary storage systems. With Brocade FLM, the IT administrators at Gehring have a powerful tool for analyzing, classifying, moving, and organizing data by aligning data policies with the company's business priorities. Once set up, Brocade FLM automatically classifies data according to its relative value for the company and automates its distribution to NetApp secondary storage.

MORE EFFICIENT STORAGE UTILIZATION

The implementation of Brocade FLM was done on a Dell PowerEdge 2550 running Microsoft Windows Server 2003. First, the company's NetApp F810 was defined as active storage and its NetApp R200 as offline storage in Brocade FLM. Based on a previously conducted analysis of the data on the NetApp F810 with the Brocade FileAges tool, specific rules were then set up on the Brocade FLM server. The rules comprise all required criteria for migrating the data from active to offline storage. Decisive criteria includes the file size, file age, file attributes, file name and/or suffix, and storage location. In a first step, policies were configured with two criteria: the size of the file and the time since the file was last accessed.

Today, the automated rules run once a week on Sundays on the Brocade FLM server. The procedure automatically finds all files that must be migrated. On average, the system handles approximately 20,000 files per week, or 10 to 15 GB of data volume. After just six months, 1.1 million files representing 570 GB of data had been migrated from active storage to offline storage. The next stage of the implementation involved adjusting the rules so that the capacity utilization of the active storage system is approximately 80 percent, thereby resulting in a good ratio between performance and

disk space. For users, no major changes are evident in terms of accessing or displaying files because the processes for writing, displaying, and deleting files are unchanged.

ROI: NUMBER ONE PRIORITY

"Gehring first implemented Brocade FLM in 2005, and we found that the product paid for itself after just six months of using it in our environment," explains Klaus Fellmeth, head of IT for the Gehring Group. "Without Brocade FLM, the only viable alternatives would have led to significantly greater costs or would have required us to distribute the data over several locations."

He adds, "The Brocade FLM solution also enables us to generate detailed reports about data growth and to obtain accurate information regarding how many files have been created, altered, or read—and at which times."

Today, the Brocade FLM policy-based data management software solution is helping Gehring automate the lifecycle of its file data, seamlessly moving files between primary and secondary tiers of storage. As a result, the company can proactively manage the lifecycle of its file data from creation to disposal by automatically aligning its storage policies with its business priorities—and thereby reducing both its hardware and data backup costs.

For more information, visit www.brocade.com.

WHAT IS A FAN?

"A FAN involves a systematic approach to organizing the various file-related technologies in today's enterprise. The goal of a FAN is to provide IT managers with a scalable, flexible, and intelligent platform for the cost-effective delivery of enterprise file information and a much higher level of file control."

— Brad O'Neill, Taneja Group

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